



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**  
**REGION IX**  
75 Hawthorne Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105

January 29, 2010

## **EPA Open Letter to the Yerington Community**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently released information on groundwater conditions near the former Anaconda mine site. An Associated Press article published in November 2009 used this information, and we would like to clarify some topics presented in the article.

### **City of Yerington water supply**

Water supplied to residents by the City of Yerington Water System is not impacted by the mine site. City water is regularly tested and complies with federal drinking water requirements. Information on the City of Yerington Water System is available at [www.yerington.net](http://www.yerington.net).

### **Groundwater and private well contamination**

EPA's information shows that shallow groundwater contamination from the mine has migrated off-site near the north boundary. EPA continues to gather data to further define how far the contamination extends, both vertically (how deep below the ground surface) and horizontally (how far from the mine).

It is likely that a number of private water supply wells North and possibly West of the site have been impacted by contamination from the mine. EPA is investigating this further because most of the currently available data is from 50-60 feet below the ground surface, while private wells generally use groundwater from much deeper in the aquifer. In addition, the primary contaminants, uranium and arsenic, also occur naturally in local groundwater, and we will be conducting studies to help determine how much of the contamination in the wells is coming from the mine.

### **Measures to protect the health of residents with private wells**

EPA is improving its Domestic Well Monitoring Program to protect residents with wells North and West of the site from exposure to mine contamination. The program, which was initiated in 2003 by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, the Bureau of Land Management and the EPA, tests the wells for uranium and other contaminants.

Improvements to the program include more thorough and frequent testing. The revised program will sample about 70 private wells quarterly and more than 50 wells semi-annually.

As a precautionary measure, Atlantic Richfield Company (ARC), the company that EPA holds responsible for some of the contamination, provides bottled water to residents whose well water contains over 25 parts per billion uranium (the federal standard for uranium is 30 parts per billion).

### **Addressing immediate threats from the mine site**

In addition to providing bottled water to affected private well owners, EPA has taken other actions to address immediate concerns from mine site contamination. We have capped areas of the site to reduce dust, implemented systems to protect birds, repaired leaking heap leach fluid collection ponds, and cleaned up kerosene-contaminated soil leftover from the bankrupt Arimetco.

We are continuing to conduct work that improves conditions at the site. Over the next year, we will perform additional removal actions to address electrical hazards, radiation and asbestos in select locations at the site. We are also removing a tire pile that may present a fire threat and a deteriorating building at the site fence line that contains asbestos. We had planned to cover the former Anaconda evaporation ponds this year to reduce dust and protect wildlife. However, we are re-evaluating our plans for these evaporation ponds, which will delay this work but help make the capping more effective in the long term.

We are preparing a fact sheet on groundwater issues to explain them in greater detail and will continue updating the community on other aspects of EPA's work. If you have questions, please contact us.

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### **Overall site questions**

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